

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Navajo Mountain High School
P.O. Box 10040
Tonalea, Arizona 86044**

May 6, 2008



**Utah State Office of Education
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

Navajo Mountain High School

**P.O. Box 10040
Tonalea, AZ 86044**

May 6, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 6, 2008, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Navajo Mountain High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Alva Clarke is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Navajo Mountain High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Navajo Mountain High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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Patrick McDermott	Technology Director

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Alva Clarke Principal*
Orlo Knight Assistant Principal

Counseling

Clarita Stevens Counselor

Support Staff

Daphene Atene EDNET Technician
Mary Lou John Cook
Elsie Jones Secretary
Wilson Sloan Custodian

Faculty

Lynda Kerr	Todd Smallcanyon	David Weisz
Orlo Knight	Clarita Stevens	
Susan Nielson	Margery Weisz	

*New principal, Janine Smith, appointed just prior to visit.

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

We will foster a positive environment where everyone can acquire and apply the tools needed to become responsible citizens.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Jointly committed, all stakeholders have the responsibility to advance our mission and to provide and maintain a safe environment where all students can receive a quality education.
- Accountability is imperative in education for all stakeholders.
- Good instruction happens when students are actively engaged in the learning process and can relate it to the real world.
- Students have the right and responsibility to learn. Teachers have the right and responsibility to teach.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. We will establish a school climate in which learning and achievement are honored and valued by all students, parents, and teachers.
2. 70% of students will score at least “sufficient” on reading and math CORE tests. 90% of students will pass the UB SCT reading and math tests.
3. School average score on the District Writing Assessment will improve by 0.5% points. 80% of students will pass the UB SCT writing test.
4. Students will pass 90% of classes on schedule.
5. Attendance will improve to 96%

Date of visit: May 6, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Roy L. Hoyt, Hurricane High School, Washington School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
NAVAJO MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Navajo Mountain High School is located about five miles north of the Utah/Arizona border along highway route N16, 35 miles north of the Inscription House Trading Post. Navajo Mountain High School is one of five high schools located within the boundaries of the San Juan School District. It is probably the most remote secondary school situated on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

Navajo Mountain High School is a rural, public senior high school, serving grades nine through twelve. Current enrollment is listed at 35 students. The school originally started in a portable classroom in 1996. The current high school building was completed in 1998. Navajo Mountain High School has maintained accreditation since 1999 through the Northwest Association of Schools.

Currently, the average class size is 5.7 students. Navajo Mountain High School has one administrator, who is a male Caucasian with a BA in elementary education, an M.Ed. in secondary education, and an administrative endorsement for grades one through twelve. Out of seven teachers, three are male and four are female. Five of the teachers are Caucasian and two are Navajo. All seven of the teachers possess a bachelor's degree. The average age of the teachers is 43 years old.

All of Navajo Mountain High School's students are Navajo. There are 16 female students and 19 male students. Twenty students are classified as English language learners (ELL), and 15 of the students are considered non-English language learners (Non-ELL).

Seven students are assessed as special education students. Six of the students are considered to have specific learning disabilities (SLDs). One student is considered to have a severe disability. The six SLD students receive most of their instruction via inclusion. One full-time faculty member is employed and splits her time between the special ed. population and the preschool Early Intervention Program. About 80 percent of her time is devoted to work in the school with the special ed. students. A four-hour-per day aide assists with one severe student and the early intervention program.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The school's profile incorporated survey data from parents, students, and teachers, as well as Utah Core Test data. It also included local demographic information. The faculty and staff survey was taken in late September 2008. Three teachers and a principal were new at the time, including the fine arts teacher. The survey information reported was minimal for new teachers and the principal,

whereas the veteran teachers and staff were commenting on longstanding problems. The staff survey shows agreement among faculty and staff about curriculum and instruction, except for the science-health area. One weak area was that of the administration. The concerns about accountability and spending according to plan were more likely an evaluation of the outgoing administration by older teachers, as these factors were unknown about the new principal. The staff survey indicated a problem with drugs in the community, as well.

All students and 21 of 26 parents were surveyed. Parents felt that facilities and technology were adequate and that the instruction was competent and caring, but did not feel that their voice was valued in the process. The relevance of instruction was also a concern. Most student responses were positive; however, accessibility to the media center was an issue. Students also felt their opinions to be somewhat undervalued.

Due to the school's rural setting, its staff and administration experience a great deal of turnover. The school has had three administrators in as many years. In fact, the principal who had been at the school this past year, developed the self-study, and prepared for the onsite visit was replaced shortly before the visit.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

It is recommended that the school profile include a broader picture of what happens at the school. The school should continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze data. Considering the small student population, it would be reasonable for the staff to have specific achievement data as well as periodic assessment of growth for each student. Profile information will provide information pertinent to special needs of the school community and answer the question of who is learning and who is not.

- c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

Although the current self-study provides valuable information as to the current situation at Navajo Mountain High School, the information is incomplete. The school profile can be further developed to include data that will assist staff members in responding to the needs of the school's current population.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Include information detailing what students do following graduation.
- Disaggregated data needs to be collected and analyzed. Some data has been collected, but it has not been utilized to determine the extent of who is learning

and who is not. This ongoing process will inform the school community of what decisions to make to improve teaching and learning.

- Collectively improve the school improvement plan, based on the needs identified by analysis of all data collected. Streamlining goals that specifically detail who is responsible, resources needed, when the steps will take place, and how attainment of progress on actions steps and goals will be determined should help the faculty stay focused.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

- a) *To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?*

Interviews with the administration and staff affirmed that they participated in the development of the school's mission and beliefs statements. Parental and community member participation in this process was limited.

- b) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?*

The school needs to rearticulate the DRSLs so that they describe what students should look like once they leave the school. Most of the DRSLs are stated as achievement goals. The school community is encouraged reexamine its DRSLs so that they align with the stated mission and beliefs statements.

- c) *Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.*

The school has yet to develop the means for measuring these DRSLs.

- d) *To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?*

Although the staff of the school is committed to the success of the students, the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs are not yet part of the culture of the

school. These need to be more fully articulated to the parents, students, and community members.

Curriculum:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The staff utilizes the State Core Curriculum in each content area, as well as the cultural heritage of the students, as the basis for what students should know, understand, and be able to do.

- b) *To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?*

The Visiting Team witnessed an effort by the staff to engage students in higher-order thinking skills.

- c) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?*

Because the school's DRSLs are worded as statistical benchmarks, it is difficult for the staff to focus on specific life skills within the curriculum. Development and refinement of the DRSLs should include the entire school community (parents, students, and community members). Once the DRSLs have been rearticulated, the staff will need to work to institutionalize these into the culture of the school through curriculum development and instructional practices.

- d) *How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?*

The staff has been provided with school-wide data for the purpose of identifying gaps in student achievement. The use of this data is in the beginning stages, and it will be important for staff members to receive additional training so that it can be more fully used to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Instruction:

- a) *To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?*

It is apparent that the staff at Navajo Mountain High School is well grounded in a wide variety of instructional strategies. The Visiting Team conversation's with

staff members indicated that they employ several instructional strategies that will reach their students. The staff is encouraged to increase their ability to engage all learners and continue the emphasis on improving instructional practices that reach all students.

- b) *To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?*

Because the DRSLs are worded as statistical benchmarks, it is difficult for the staff to focus on specific instructional strategies that support these DRSLs. Once the DRSLs have been rearticulated, the staff will need to work to institutionalize these into the culture of the school through curriculum development and instructional practices.

- c) *To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?*

The staff has identified several potential topics for professional development in the areas of technology use in the classroom, ELL instructional techniques, and writing across the curriculum. However, they have not yet identified the “how” and “when” of this professional development plan. The action plan should delineate the timelines and means for delivering training to the staff.

- d) *To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?*

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that teachers were knowledgeable in their content areas and proficient in their instructional approach. It was obvious to the Visiting Team that most teachers were concerned about their instructional effectiveness, and that they desired to identify areas for improvement in their own teaching practice and a willingness to make necessary changes.

- e) *To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?*

The Visiting Team recognized significant improvement in the use of technology. Teachers have access to a wide variety of technology tools to assist them in instruction. It is also noted that the staff has included, as a part of its action plan, a goal to provide ongoing training in the use of technology.

Assessment:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Most classes are using measures beyond paper-and-pencil tests. Some classes are using formative testing for the purpose of modifying instruction, but there don't seem to be school-wide standards that are being articulated for measurement. Disaggregating the data will provide additional information on individual student progress and offer the framework for the development of school-wide assessments tied to the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?*

The Visiting Team recommends that the school look for opportunities to collect data from assessments beyond standardized test scores. The development of benchmark assessment is on a department or classroom level rather than a school-wide basis. However, ongoing efforts to create school-wide assessments will provide additional data. Clarification of the school's DRSLs and the identification of specific, measurable indicators will also help facilitate school-wide measurements.

- c) *To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?*

There is evidence that the staff has periodically reviewed school-wide data made available through the state. Yearly school-wide performance goals have been set. The Visiting Team encourages the entire staff and administration to meet on a regular basis to review student scores and to become more familiar with the progress of each individual student in the school.

- d) *To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?*

The Visiting Team encourages the school to schedule regular, ongoing professional development. This collaboration time will allow the staff to develop classroom assessments and other best teaching practices.

- e) *To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?*

Once Navajo Mountain High School has fully articulated its DRSLs, it is recommended that the staff develop indicators that measure success.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?*

One of the challenges for Navajo Mountain High School is to continue to work toward school improvement despite changes in administration (i.e., three different principals in as many years). Past principals have made a great effort to hire and retain a qualified school leadership. The new principal and staff now face the challenge of focusing on the self-study for school improvement.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?*

The school leadership is beginning to employ data-driven, research-based decision-making strategies. The data from state assessments (UBSCT and CRTs) is made available and shared openly with the staff. While there is, to some extent, effective use of state summative assessments, there is a need for training in the use of formative assessments. Teachers can use this data to drive instruction.

- c) *To what extent does the leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLS, and school improvement?*

The leadership at Navajo Mountain High School provides skillful stewardship of the school. School-wide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to support student learning. The allocation and use of resources appears to be aligned with school goals and action plans.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?*

The administration encourages commitment, participation, and collaboration. The future administration is encouraged to continue building the knowledge, skills and expertise of the staff to employ data-driven and research-based decision making.

- e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

The Visiting Team, through conversations with students and teachers, was able to determine that students felt connected to and supported at school. Although not formal in nature, the small size of the school allowed teachers and staff members to personally know each of the students and meet their emotional, social, and academic needs. Staff members live in the same small community with students, which allowed them to get to know students and their family situations in great detail.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process, that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?*

There is evidence that the school is creating and sustaining a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to continue its efforts to collaborate on a more regular basis in order to meet the needs of the students.

- b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that there is a strong desire at the school to do what is best for students. The school needs to clarify its DRSLs, commit to regular, ongoing professional development, and focus on goals that are attainable and time-line driven.

- c) *To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The school-wide action plan addresses the needs of the school community and is structured to support the needs of the school and the students. There is evidence showing that the administration and staff are committed to following through with the plan, and to continue into the next phase. The Visiting Team encourages the school to simplify and reduce the number of current goals within the action plan so that those will be more attainable for stakeholders.

- d) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Visiting Team found that Navajo Mountain High School has, through its collaborative effort, created conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team observed activities and programs that reduced student and teacher isolation and created a sense of community within the school. Employees at the school seemed to be comfortable and a part of the working environment. Students indicated a very positive attitude about their teachers, the administration, and the school in general. They felt the small class sizes allowed them opportunities that they would not get in a larger school. Students also expressed that teachers were receptive to their needs and willing to expend extra effort to help them learn.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The Visiting Team observed a climate of mostly informal collaboration within the school. The staff indicated that they frequently share instructional practices and

classroom management techniques. The staff is encouraged to implement regular, formal, collaborative efforts that support the improvement process.

- c) *To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team observed that most stakeholders were involved in the self-study.

- d) *How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?*

The action plan of the school has identified the need to better communicate with stakeholders. The Visiting Team encourages Navajo Mountain High School to communicate with parents through phone calls, newspapers, parent-teacher conferences, and any other means to increase participation in their students' education.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Navajo Mountain High School for having created a culture and climate conducive to a positive learning environment. Students feel welcome in the school and are treated as able and responsible citizens.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff members of Navajo Mountain High School for their willingness to work together to improve student learning. The staff has done a very good job with limited training, and the process has provided new insights and a desire to improve the achievement of students.
- The Visiting Team commends Navajo Mountain High School for providing additional help to students, as well various enrichment programs that are important for students in such an isolated community. The school also does an excellent job of providing distance learning for those students who wish to take courses that are not offered.
- The Visiting Team commends Navajo Mountain High School for maintaining an immaculate physical facility. It is obvious that the custodial staff and stakeholders have a great deal of pride in the school

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends regular, focused professional development. A weekly or bi-monthly meeting for the sole purpose of training will help the school reach its goals. Professional development activities should focus on best teaching practices that will help students thrive. The staff needs to consider answering the questions, “What are students learning?” “Who is learning?” “How are they learning?” and “How do we know they are learning?”
- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be narrowed down to include fewer goals that will be more manageable. One or two goals per year will make the plan seem more attainable to stakeholders. The action plan should include timelines, person(s) responsible, estimated budget resources, and means of evaluating effectiveness of the plan. The plan should focus on fewer improvement targets and take the time and energy to address these well.
- The Visiting Team recommends the continuous analysis of data. This would include not only data from UBSCT and end-of-level tests, but also assessment data that takes place in the classroom (formative assessment). Given the small number of students in the school, a comprehensive system for gathering, analyzing, and using data to drive school improvement should be manageable. Eventually, these efforts should extend to gathering and using data to monitor and evaluate improvement efforts as they are implemented and refined.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Navajo Mountain High School reevaluate the DRSLs so that they articulate what all students should understand or be able to do. The school should also develop indicators that will assess the school’s progress in developing these results.